

Weaving Magic through Social Entrepreneurship!



The word magic takes us all back to fond memories of childhood, of magic shows, circuses and the like, but when someone decides to bring magic into the lives of those who are less fortunate, it is a beautiful story to be retold several times. The magicians here are Dr. R.V Ramani, founder and managing director of Sankara Eye Care Institutions in India and his better half Dr. Radha Ramani. What started as a small clinic in Coimbatore is now a chain of nine community hospitals across India with plans for more such hospitals coming up in the near future.

The driving force behind these hospitals is that they work on a ratio of 80:20 free to paid patients model and their only focus has been providing quality eye care since their inception. The doctors across all these hospitals perform at least 500 free eye surgeries a day and work tirelessly to achieve the aim of Vision 20:20 by the year 2020 and they seem to be well on target having performed the millionth free eye surgery in the month of March 2013.

The institution boasts of an enviable surgery success rate of 98.8%. Dr. Ramani was invited by the Government of India to be one of the members of the National Vision 2020 team constituted by the government. Dr Radha Ramani has been a personality to reckon with in her own way. Recipient of many prestigious awards from the rotary and ladies circles, she has worked tirelessly in the rural areas to improve healthcare among women, children, and also improve sanitation standards in villages.

Inspired by the Sankaracharyas of Kanchi, the couple established the Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Medical Centre in the year 1977 to provide primary healthcare to the needy population which has mushroomed into a number of state of the art eye hospitals across India. They haven't restricted themselves to hospitals alone. Medical camps are organized on a regular basis where patients are screened in rural areas and if needed referred to one of the hospitals for treatment. Healthcare is one good that emerged from this initiative but the institution has given people from remote areas more sources of income and they are no longer solely reliant on agriculture. For such a gigantic cause an external arm is always needed to give that extra push and provide the necessary support in its initial years to every hospital before it's established and can be self sustainable. This support is rendered by its non- profit fundraising arm, Sankara Eye foundation, USA. The foundation has a huge presence across different states in United States. The same ethos with which Dr. Ramani built hospitals in India drives volunteers here to further the cause and make sure the hospitals get all the help they need. Organizing walkathons, religious festivities, concerts and many other similar events is their forte.

The latest in the offering is a series of **Volunteer and Donor Appreciation Dinners** being organized throughout the United States in places such as San Jose, Austin, Houston, New Jersey and New York to bring together all visionaries who have worked tirelessly to inspire more people to contribute to the cause. The reason why these events stand out among a host of other events being organized is that the founders themselves will be gracing the occasion to talk of their journey that helped them give vision to millions back in India. How can you and I benefit from this? The dinner is an opportunity for thousands of us to be able to meet the visionaries in person, to listen to a story that has been no less than a fairy tale, to understand that all it takes to bring about a change is the will to do so, the steely determination to carry on despite obstacles.

If one day we are asked to not see things it's an unimaginable situation. It takes courage and enthusiasm to carve out some time from our busy life to work towards bringing a change, to do something that will benefit someone sitting thousands of miles away. One does not have to move mountains to make an impact. It could be a skill that one could help with, volunteer with teams at various events being organized, or donate some money that will go towards building state of the art hospitals across India. A couple of hours

from your life, a little bit of your hard earned money will help someone see this beautiful world. It's never too late to start. All the information that you need to get started is available here: www.giftofvision.org .